

3.13 VISUAL RESOURCES

Information contained in this section is based on the *SR-22/West Orange County Connection Visual Impact Assessment* (December 2000) and the *Reduced Build Alternative Visual Impact Assessment Addendum* (December 2000). For a more detailed discussion of visual resources, see Appendix K.

3.13.1 Regional Setting

The SR-22/West Orange County Connection is located in a portion of Southern California that is almost entirely urbanized, with most development less than 50 years old. The topography of the study area is generally flat or gently sloping. Nearly all the vegetation is exotic species that have been purposely introduced (landscaping) or inadvertently introduced (weedy species). Most of the area is suburban in nature, with a substantial amount of landscaping in the form of street trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and lawns. The study area is crossed by numerous waterways, but these are mostly in flood control channels lined with concrete. Two regional waterways, the Santa Ana River and Santiago Creek, cross the study area.

The suburban development that makes up most of the study area is characterized by one- to two-story buildings separated by small landscaped and parking areas. In some locations there are taller buildings (office buildings) or larger buildings (industrial facilities and shopping malls) separated by large parking lots or open areas. Near the northwestern portion of the study area there are large areas with little development made up of the U.S. Naval Weapons Station. This open area contrasts strongly with most of the remainder of the study area.

Views within the study area are generally confined to the local area due to development. In some areas, however, more distant views are possible. In these areas, regional landmarks are visible, such as the San Gabriel Mountains to the north, the San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast, and the Santa Ana Mountains to the east. At a very few locations, the Pacific Ocean and Catalina Island are visible, especially from upper levels of buildings and high freeway overpasses. Views of these regional topographical features are often obscured by natural and pollution-related air quality conditions, including fog, marine layers, and smog.

3.13.2 Viewshed

The study area for the SR-22/West Orange County Connection visual analysis is called the viewshed. The viewshed is defined as all areas where physical changes associated with the proposed alternatives could be seen. The viewshed is influenced by existing topography, vegetation, and structures.

Beginning at the west end of the viewshed, in the vicinity of I-605 between Katella Avenue and the I-605/I-405 interchange, the viewshed is very narrow to the east and wider to the west. Existing noise barriers limit the views of the Rossmoor area east of I-605, but to the west, a more open area exists, with the view bounded by the levees along the San Gabriel River/Coyote Creek/Los Alamitos Channel. This area is partially screened by tall trees along the west side of I-605.

In the area of the I-605/I-405 interchange eastward on I-405 to approximately Bolsa Chica Road/Valley View Street, the viewshed widens, especially to the south. Here there are large expanses of open space associated with the U.S. Naval Weapons Station. To the north are noise barriers, which start out set back a considerable distance from the traveled roadway near the I-605/I-405 interchange and get closer to the edge of pavement after Seal Beach Boulevard, narrowing the viewshed.

Along most of SR-22, which starts near the I-405/SR-22 interchange and continues eastward to SR-55, the area consists of a wide variety of views. Most of the views in this area are partially screened by vegetation alongside SR-22. Approximately half of the viewshed has restricted views due to noise barriers or immediately adjacent land uses. There are several freeway overpasses and pedestrian overcrossings, however, which extend views. Open space areas, such as parks, school yards, and the Santa Ana River, extend views from the freeway extensively, though not nearly as wide as at U.S. Naval Weapons Station. The taller buildings in Orange around The Block (at The City Drive) and the MainPlace Mall (at Main

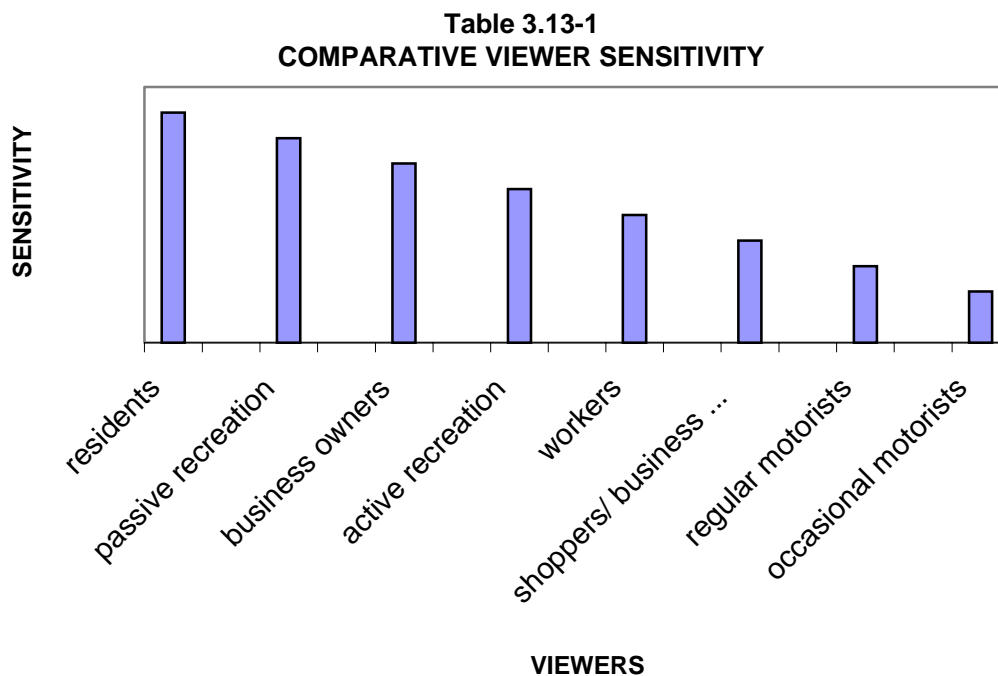
Street) have views of the freeway system (SR-22, I-5, and SR-57) for long distances. This is quickly followed by a depressed portion of the freeway, where the viewshed is very narrow until the SR-22/SR-55 interchange.

The interchange between SR-22 and SR-55 contains a relatively narrow viewshed, with noise barriers and dense suburban uses, limiting views to the immediately adjacent land uses. Moving north on SR-55, the viewshed is fairly tight until after it passes over La Veta Avenue, where Yorba Park can be seen. The viewshed north of Yorba Park along SR-55 is fairly expansive. The small portion of SR-55 south of SR-22 within the project area has a narrow viewshed due to noise barriers on both sides of the freeway.

The Pacific Electric right-of-way portion of the viewshed is located along the former Pacific Electric railroad. Most of this area is physically and visually inaccessible to the public, except for where immediately adjacent land uses have views of the open space represented by the vacant right-of-way. At the crossing of the Santa Ana River, views are extended along the riverbed

3.13.3 Viewer Groups

The sensitivity of different types of viewers varies depending upon their activity, their awareness of the surrounding environment, and their familiarity with the environment. Table 3.13-1 shows a graphic representation of the comparative sensitivity of the various types of viewers in the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed.



By far, the largest percentage of viewers in the viewshed is made up of the motorists on the freeway system. Most of these viewers have a moderate to low sensitivity to the visual environment due to their concentration on driving and their focus on their destination. (Note: Some of the motorists are tourists, which

tend to be more aware of the visual environment. Others live or work within view of the freeway network; their sensitivity is discussed below.)

The next most common type of viewer in the viewshed is the local resident/worker located in areas adjacent to the freeway network. This viewer is typically much more sensitive to the surrounding visual environment than the typical motorist due to a sense of ownership and familiarity with the view. Viewer sensitivity for this viewer group is moderate to high.

Other smaller groups of viewers also occur in the viewshed. Recreational viewers are those using the parks and other recreational facilities along the corridor. Their sensitivity to the visual environment tends to be high if they are engaged in passive activities or moderate if they are concentrating on more active sports. People visiting the viewshed for shopping or other business reasons tend to have a moderate to low sensitivity to the surrounding environment because their activities are usually indoors in areas with limited views of the freeway network.

3.13.4 Existing Visual Quality at Key Viewpoints

It is not possible to analyze every view within the SR-22/West Orange County Connection. Moving a short distance one way or another or turning one's head slightly, provides a completely different view. Therefore, the viewshed is first divided into landscape units. A landscape unit is an area of distinct, but not necessarily homogenous, visual character. The landscape units for the SR-22/West Orange County Connection are the Suburban Landscape Unit, the Urban Landscape Unit, and the Open Landscape Unit (described below). Typical views, called key viewpoints, are selected from each type of these landscape units to represent different types of views, or landscape units. One additional viewpoint is used to represent the motorists' view, called the View From the Freeway.

Existing visual quality of the viewpoints was judged by three criteria: vividness, intactness, and unity. Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive patterns. In the context of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection area, a view of one of the architecturally distinctive buildings in the Orange County skyline would rate high for vividness.

Intactness is the visual integrity of the visual environment and its freedom from encroaching elements. In the SR-22/West Orange County Connection area, a well-maintained residential street, with few conflicting elements such as non-conforming uses, utilities, or signage would rate high for intactness.

Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape when considered as a whole. The well-designed and maintained Orange Circle, at the intersection of Glassell Street and Chapman Avenue in Orange, which carefully blends historical and modern development, would rate high for unity.

A. SUBURBAN LANDSCAPE UNIT

This landscape unit makes up approximately 29 percent of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed. It is made up of a variety of land uses, including primarily single-family residences and neighborhood commercial. There are smaller areas with other land uses, including multi-family residences, schools, small parks, institutional uses, and small industrial facilities. Usually, building heights do not exceed two stories and are typically surrounded by a substantial amount of landscaping such as street landscaping and residential yards. In many of the older residential areas, the tree canopy is mature, creating extensive shaded areas. In most areas in this landscape unit, the development is fairly dense, with very little undeveloped land.

The key viewpoint for the Suburban Landscape Unit is located in a residential area south of SR-22 in Santa Ana (Figure 3.13-1). This key viewpoint is typical of the size, age, density, and condition of much of the residential development in the landscape unit.

At the Suburban Key Viewpoint, visual evidence of the freeway is mostly screened by vegetation, either in the freeway right-of-way or in the adjacent yards. There are visual indications of the freeway in this view, however, such as the signs, lights, and noise barriers.

This viewpoint rates high for vividness, due in large part to the street and yard landscaping. In-tactness is rated as moderate, due to the few encroaching factors such as signs, lighting, and the noise barrier (which is not visible in Figure 3.13-1, but can be seen from many of the residences). Unity is rated at high because the entire neighborhood was developed at about the same time, with similar scale houses, lot sizes, and house designs, and the maintenance of the properties is at a similar high level. The overall visual quality at the Suburban Key Viewpoint is rated at moderately high.



SR-22 / West Orange County Connection Project

Suburban Key Viewpoint

Figure 3.13-1

B. URBAN LANDSCAPE UNIT

This landscape unit makes up approximately 30 percent of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed. It is characterized by larger or taller buildings than the Suburban Landscape Unit. Buildings in the Urban Landscape Unit are generally of two types: multi-story office or apartment buildings; and very large, one- to two-story buildings such as offices, malls, ware-

houses, or factories. Large areas of open space often separate the buildings, either landscaping, undeveloped land, or, more commonly, parking lots. Although these areas are actually more dense than the previous landscape unit – that is, there are more people working, residing, or visiting in the same amount of space – they may not seem as dense because of these open areas separating the large buildings. Despite landscaping, these areas are dominated by hard surfaces, including the buildings themselves and the surrounding paved areas. Views within the Urban Landscape Unit are often extensive, especially from the upper floors of tall buildings.

The key viewpoint for the Urban Landscape Unit is located at One City Plaza (in The Block in Orange), on the ninth floor of a tall office building overlooking SR-22 (Figure 3.13-2). This key viewpoint is typical of the view of hundreds of workers in the Urban Landscape Unit.

At the Urban Key Viewpoint, the freeway is fully visible and is, in fact, an important unifying element of the view. Parking lots and roadways dominate this view.

This viewpoint rates high for vividness, due to the scale of the view and the abundance of mature landscaping softening the edges of the built environment. Intactness is also rated as high, with very few encroaching factors visible from the distance of this ninth-floor office. Finally, unity also rates high because the patterns of development evident at this elevated location appear well-organized. The overall visual quality at the Urban Key Viewpoint is rated at high.

***SR-22 / West Orange County Connection Project******Urban Key Viewpoint*****Figure 3.13-2****C. OPEN LANDSCAPE UNIT**

This landscape unit makes up approximately 41 percent of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed. Large areas with limited amounts of hardscape or buildings characterize it. This is a very important landscape unit because of the limited amount of open space in this densely developed portion of Orange County. Much of the open space in the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed is not physically accessible to the general public (such as the U.S. Naval Air Station), but these areas are still important for their visual relief. Views widen substantially in the Open Landscape Unit, due to the lack of intervening structures.

The key viewpoint for the Open Landscape Unit is along the Santa Ana River Trail in Orange, just south of SR-22 (Figure 3.13-3). This key viewpoint is typical of the view from open space areas that are accessible to the public. At the Open Key Viewpoint, the freeway is fully visible, cutting across the view and providing a background for the view. The foreground turf areas dominate the view, however.

This viewpoint rates moderately high for vividness, due primarily to the large expanse of turf. In-tactness is rated at only moderate, due to a number of encroaching elements, including the concrete diffuser in the riverbed, the freeway, and the billboards along the freeway. Unity is rated at moderately high, with the linear golf course providing a unifying element, compromised somewhat by the unorganized mixture of elements around its perimeter. The overall visual quality at the Open Key Viewpoint is rated at moderately high.



SR-22 / West Orange County Connection Project**Open Key Viewpoint****Figure 3.13-3****D. VIEW FROM THE FREEWAY**

The view from the freeway goes through all the landscape units, but the view is very different because of the activity of the viewer (in an automobile) and the speed at which the viewer encounters the view. Details are lost in such a view, and only the basic elements of the landscape are highly noticeable – large plants (or masses of small plants), buildings, walls, large signs, and similar elements. Although the view from the freeways that are part of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed is relatively varied, most of the route, especially on SR-22 itself, is characterized by fairly tall, dense, and mature landscaping. When compared to the relatively “un-landscaped” freeways such as Interstate 5, the view from SR-22 is remarkably “green.” There are relatively few areas with noise barriers or retaining walls in the existing view. Mostly, the viewer perceives a green edge, with the surrounding urban or suburban environment visible in quick glimpses between or over the trees.

The key viewpoint for the View From the Freeway is located along the westbound SR-22, approaching the Beach Boulevard exit in Garden Grove (Figure 3.13-4). This key viewpoint is typical of much of the view from the SR-22 corridor.

Of course, the freeway itself is visually dominant in this view; it makes up the majority of the viewer’s field of view. Freeway landscaping frames the edges of the image well, but overall the view is of a wide piece of concrete lined with trees.

This viewpoint rates moderate for vividness, dominated by the concrete and relieved by landscaping. Intactness is hampered by utility lines and uneven pavement colors and textures, re-

sulting in a moderate rating. Unity is rated at high, with the linear freeway and bordering trees seeming to be all of one piece. The overall visual quality at the View From the Freeway is rated at moderately high.



SR-22 / West Orange County Connection Project

View From the Freeway

Figure 3.13-4

3.13.5 Existing Visual Quality at Important Visual Resources

Important visual resources include areas where the visual environment is particularly important to the function of the land use. In the SR-22/West Orange County Connection study area, these include parks, recreational areas, trails, historic properties, and other visual resources identified in local policy documents. Figure 3.13-5, at the end of this section, illustrates the locations of these important visual resources in the viewshed. Table 3.13-2 describes these resources.

**Table 3.13-2
IMPORTANT VISUAL RESOURCES**

Important Visual Resource	Description
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Parks	
Blue Bell Park Seal Beach	Small community park at the corner of Almond Avenue and Aster Street. Across Almond Avenue from I-405. Currently not visible from I-405 due to noise barrier. Picnic shelter and open lawn area used for field sports. Existing visual quality: high.
Almond Park Seal Beach	Community park on Almond Avenue at Oleander Street. Adjacent to I-405. Currently not visible from I-405 due to noise barrier. Playground equipment and grassy play areas. Landscaping. Existing visual quality: high.
Garden Grove Park Garden Grove	Very large regional park located between SR-22 and Westminster Avenue at Atlantis Way and Deodora Drive. Adjacent to SR-22. Heavily screened view of SR-22 due to mature landscaping. Heavily used with multiple uses, including ball fields, picnic pavilions and shelters, play areas, activity centers, volleyball areas, football fields, and roller hockey arena. Existing visual quality: high.
Eldridge Park (Fallbrook Park) Santa Ana	Linear open space park at 2933 North Fallbrook Drive. Adjacent to the SR-22/I-5 connectors. Noise barrier and elevated structures visible from park. Turf areas and young landscaping. Existing visual quality: high.
Santiago Park Santa Ana	Large linear park along Santiago Creek between SR-22 and Main Street. One end adjacent to SR-22. Elevated freeway and fill slopes visible from park in vicinity of archery range. Variety of uses, including picnic areas, trails, tennis courts, play equipment, lawn bowling, archer, baseball fields, clubhouse, and passive recreation. Existing visual quality: high.
Hart Park Orange	Large multi-use facility adjacent to SR-22 at Glassell Street, and bisected by Santiago Creek. Connected to Santiago Park (above) by a trail. Currently not visible from SR-22 due to noise barrier. Activity building, bandshell, picnic shelter, picnic tables, barbecues, playground area, swimming pool, horseshoe pits, lighted baseball field, softball fields, tennis court, sand volleyball courts, large areas of passive open space. Existing visual quality: high.
Yorba Park Orange	(Currently closed to mitigate leaking methane gas.) West of SR-55 at Chapman Avenue. Existing visual quality: high.
Trails	
Los Alamitos/ Coyote Creek Channel Trail Several jurisdictions	Borders Coyote Creek, Los Alamitos Channel, and San Gabriel Rivers, west of I-605. On elevated berm, with I-605 visible from trail in the distance (sometimes screened by landscaping). Multi-purpose bike/pedestrian/equestrian trail. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Coyote Creek (East Side) Trail Los Alamitos	<i>Proposed.</i> Class I bike trail on east side of Coyote Creek. City of Los Alamitos currently revising their general plan for 2010; draft version does not include the trail (Hitz, 1999). Existing visual quality: moderate.
Hoover Street Trail Westminster	Asphalt paved sidewalk on one side of Hoover Street, passing under SR-22. Freeway is visible from the trail. Existing visual quality: moderately low.
Santa Ana River Trail Several jurisdictions	Class I bike multi-use trail along the Santa Ana River. In most locations, two trails, one paved for bikes, one dirt for horses and hiking. Includes undercrossings and overcrossing of all roadways and freeways completely separating it from vehicular traffic. Undercrossing at SR-22; on riverbank adjacent crossing former Pacific Electric right-of-way at grade. View of SR-22 from trail is similar to Figure 3.13-3. Pacific Electric right-of-way visible from trail. Existing visual quality: high.
Pacific Electric Trail Santa Ana	<i>Proposed.</i> Designated by City of Santa Ana as planned Class I trail throughout city. No current plans to develop. Pacific Electric right-of-way visible from trail. Existing visual quality: moderate.

Table 3.13-2 (continued)
IMPORTANT VISUAL RESOURCES

Important Visual Resource	Description
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Trails (continued)	
Santiago Creek Trail Santa Ana & Orange	Class I trail along Santiago Creek through both cities. Dirt trail. SR-22 crosses over the trail and is visible from it. Trail is planned for the SR-55/Santiago Creek area, but currently does not exist (recent bridge construction may have severed it.) Existing visual quality: high.
Other Recreational Facilities	
Old Ranch Tennis Club Seal Beach	Adjacent to I-405 at Aster Street. Currently has only limited views of I-405 due to privacy walls and perimeter landscaping. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Bolsa Grande High School Garden Grove	Between SR-22 and Westminster Boulevard, just east of Garden Grove Park. School's sports facilities, including track and football stadium directly adjacent to SR-22. Freeway is visible, though partially screened by dense vegetation. Existing visual quality: high.
Jordan Intermediate School Garden Grove	Between SR-22 and Woodbury Avenue, just west of Brookhurst Street. Ball fields directly adjacent to SR-22 and eastbound Brookhurst Street off-ramp. Freeway and ramp fully visible from ball fields. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Excelsior Elementary School Garden Grove	Between SR-22 and Woodbury Avenue, between Glendora and Ward Streets. Ball fields directly adjacent to SR-22, which is screened by dense vegetation. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Pacific Electric Railway Commemorative Area Garden Grove	Small area within the former Pacific Electric right-of-way adjacent to the north side of SR-22 at Newhope Street. Elevated SR-22 and fill slope is visible, though partially screened from area. Commemorates the former railroad and the "Big Red Cars" with bronze plaque, benches, pathways, landscaping, and other amenities. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Eisenhower Elementary School Garden Grove	Between SR-22 and School Drive, at Lilly Street and Roxley Drive. School's playground and turf area immediately adjacent to SR-22. Freeway is visible, though partially screened by vegetation. Existing visual quality: moderately high.
River View Golf Course Santa Ana	Public golf course in Santa Ana River Basin, open only when river is not flooded. Upstream end is adjacent to SR-22, which is fully visible from golf course. Figure 3.13-3 shows the view from this golf course. Existing visual quality: moderately high.
Fairhaven Elementary School Santa Ana	Between SR-22 and Fairhaven Avenue, east of Grand Avenue. School's ball fields immediately adjacent to SR-22 and eastbound Grand Avenue on-ramp. Freeway and ramp partially screened by vegetation. Existing visual quality: moderately high.
Willowick Municipal Golf Course Santa Ana	City-owned golf course between Fifth Street and the former Pacific Electric right-of-way, west of Santa Ana River. Former Pacific Electric right-of-way partially screened by perimeter landscaping. Existing visual quality: high.
Spurgeon Intermediate School Santa Ana	At corner of Fifth Street and Fairhaven Street. Ball fields and other sports facilities located immediately adjacent to the former Pacific Electric right-of-way. Right-of-way fully visible from sports areas. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Cultural Resources	
Pacific Electric Santa Ana River Bridge Santa Ana	Located at the point that the former Pacific Electric right-of-way crosses the Santa Ana River. Found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (see Section 3.5). Because the bridge is in the right-of-way, the right-of-way is visible from it. Existing visual quality: moderately high.

For locations, see Figures 3.10-1 through 3.10-3.

3.13.6 Existing Visual Quality at Visual Resources Designated by Policy Documents

Policy documents of the seven cities and the County of Orange within the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed include areas classified as scenic resources, visual resources, aesthetic assets, open space, and other similar designations. Table 3.13-3 describes these resources, and notes the existing visual quality for these facilities in the viewshed.

**Table 3.13-3
VISUAL RESOURCES DESIGNATED BY POLICY DOCUMENTS**

Designated Visual Resource	Description
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Orange County	
Los Alamitos Open Space	Identified on "Open Space/Conservation Program Map" as large open space. Includes Old Ranch Golf Course, Naval Base Golf Course, and Los Alamitos Armed Forces Reserve Center, mostly outside viewshed due to landscaping, intervening land uses. Old Ranch Golf Course is currently being redeveloped. Existing visual quality: moderately low.
Santa Ana River Corridor	Identified on "Open Space/Conservation Program Map" as scenic corridor. Includes Santa Ana River Trail and River View Golf Course (see above). Existing visual quality: moderately high.
Los Alamitos	
Coyote Creek (East Side) Trail	See Table 3.13-2. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Seal Beach	
Seal Beach Boulevard	Designated as local scenic route in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Scenic Highways Element</i> . I-405 clearly visible, especially at Seal Beach Boulevard overcrossing. Existing visual quality: moderately high.
Lampson Avenue	Designated as local scenic route in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Scenic Highways Element</i> . I-405 partially screened by vegetation, noise barriers, and intervening land uses. Adjacent construction activities. Existing visual quality: moderate.
Blue Bell Park	Designated as important recreation resource in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Open Space/Recreation/ Conservation Element</i> . See Table 3.13-2. Existing visual quality: high.
Almond Park	Designated as important recreation resource in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Open Space/Recreation/ Conservation Element</i> . See Table 3.13-2. Existing visual quality: high.
Old Ranch Country Club and Tennis Club	Designated as important recreation resource in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Open Space/Recreation/ Conservation Element</i> . See Table 3.13-2. Old Ranch Golf Course currently being redeveloped. Existing visual quality: moderately low to high.
Westminster	
Anaheim-Barber City Channel	Designated as open space opportunity. Not currently open to the public. SR-22 visible at its overcrossing. Existing visual quality: moderately low.
Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way	Designated as open space opportunity. Not currently open to the public. SR-22 visible at its overcrossing. Existing visual quality: moderately low.
Garden Grove	
Harbor Boulevard	Area near SR-22 identified in <i>Harbor Corridor Specific Plan</i> as area where city wants to enhance visual quality through landscape design. Existing visual quality: moderate.
SR-22 (Garden Grove Freeway)	Identified as subject of a specific visual enhancement effort by city. (See Figure 3.13-4.) Existing visual quality: low to moderately high.
Santa Ana	
North Harbor Specific Plan	Area west of Santa Ana River and south of Westminster Avenue. Specific policies adopted for enhancing visual quality. Existing visual quality: moderate to moderately high.
Santa Ana River	Identified as view corridor in <i>Circulation Element</i> . Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as imageability reference points to influence urban design. Existing visual quality: moderately high.
Santiago Creek	Identified as view corridor in <i>Circulation Element</i> . Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as imageability reference points to influence urban design. Existing visual quality: high.
MainPlace Mall	Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as city gateway and imageability reference points to influence urban design. Existing visual quality: moderately high.

Table 3.13-3 (continued)
VISUAL RESOURCES DESIGNATED BY POLICY DOCUMENTS

Designated Visual Resource	Description
Santa Ana (continued)	
Willowick Municipal Golf Course	Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as imageability reference points to influence urban design. (See Table 3.13-2.) Existing visual quality: high.
Orange	
Hart Park	Designated as passive open space. (See Table 3.13-2.) Existing visual quality: high.
Yorba Park	Designated as passive open space. (See Table 3.13-2.) Existing visual quality: high.
Tustin	
Hillside west of SR-55	Designated as significant topographical features. Existing visual quality: moderately high.

3.13.7 Existing Freeway Landscaping

The area along the length of SR-22 is relatively heavily landscaped, especially in comparison to other freeways in Orange County. This is a result of the fact that this freeway has not been altered much since its construction in the 1960s. Large trees have grown up within the right-of-way and in the areas bordering it. The result is a relatively tall and dense urban forest environment.

The other freeways in the SR-22/West Orange County Connection viewshed have much less landscaping. I-605 has tall trees on the west side, but they do not represent a continuous screen and the adjacent land uses are visible. On the east side, recent freeway widening has removed much of the landscaping, leaving an incomplete hedge to partially screen the adjacent noise barriers. I-405 in the viewshed has had several improvements over the years that have removed much of the landscaping. Relatively recent landscaping has been installed in some areas. SR-55 within the viewshed is currently undergoing a major improvement project and almost all of the landscaping has been removed. None of the freeways have center median plantings.

The former Pacific Electric right-of-way is generally without landscaping, except for weedy volunteer species.

The total landscaped area within the rights-of-ways is estimated to be over 150 hectares (370 acres).

3.13.8 Existing Freeway-Oriented Signage

Within the viewshed of the SR-22/West Orange County Connection are many signs that have been purposely oriented to the freeway driver. These include billboards, pole-mounted signs, roof-top signs, and wall-mounted signs. A total of 73 signs were identified within the viewshed that are specifically oriented to the freeway driver.

**Figure 3.13-5
Important Visual Resources**

(same as Figure 2.7-1 in Visual Impact Assessment – Full Build)

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